

continue to operate cavalierly in taking advantage of the public fisc and so on and so forth. Therefore, in the eyes of some members of the public and some members in this body and the press itself, it is important that the telephone records be available to the public for scrutiny. Now we have talked at great length in this body about the countervailing value of confidentiality and privacy and why that is so important in the legislative process. I am not going to deal with that issue, but I am going to deal...go back again and talk about this abuse question because we all know that when those records in effect are sealed up it does permit the continued existence of what would be perceived by many folk in the public as an abusive use of the telephone privilege. At the same token, it also enhances confidentiality and privacy. I think one of the things that has distressed me over the years so much about such things as the public exposure of state senators or others who apparently use public assets for private purposes is I think that the offense...the offense committed by the member is disproportionately arrayed before the public to the real harm that is done. The bigger story in the Nebraska Legislature is the Legislature's inability to deal with health care costs. The bigger story in the Nebraska Legislature is the Legislature's inability to deal with the rise in property taxes at the local level. The bigger story in the Nebraska Legislature is the Legislature's cavalier attitude about financing of campaigns. There are a lot of big stories that simply need to be told again and again and again to the public for this body and any other legislative body to have applying pressure to it an informed public constituency. That is the real function of the press. The press is...the press is an important partner in our democratic process but its function is to get out the big story. It is to tell the truth. It is to find the truth. It is to print the truth, and the truth lies, the truth really lies in those issues that are important to each one of us as members of society. I can guarantee you an issue that is not terribly significant to any of us in society is whether or not a state senator made ten telephone calls the last months for private purposes. Now that may seem very cavalier on my part....

PRESIDENT: One minute.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON:but I do not think it is. I think the real truth...the real truth is that to the extent that the news media focuses in on peccadillos, small foibles, it really does miss the forest for the trees, and I want to see the forest reported and not the trees, and to the extent that we continue to deal with the tree issues, we in a sense